

DR. JOHN B. MURPHY.

MEMORIAL NOTICE.

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JOHN BERNARD MURPHY, M. D.

*By R. W. Bruce Smith, M. D.,
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Dr. J. B. Murphy, medical superintendent of the Asylum for the Insane, at Brockville, Ontario, died very suddenly January 17, 1904.

He was born in Peterborough county, Ontario, March 31, 1850, and was therefore at the time of his death in the fifty-fourth year of his age. He was educated at Norwood High School and at St. Michael's College, Toronto, before entering upon his professional studies. He graduated in medicine, the prize man of his year, at Queen's University, 1876. He began the practice of medicine at Belleville, Ontario, and continued a highly successful career with a large clientele until the year 1890, when he became resident physician at Mimico Asylum. In 1894, when the asylum was opened at Brockville, he was promoted to be medical superintendent, a position which he held until the date of his death.

While the individuality which makes prominent the lives of persons and develops character is often dependent upon environment, and the manner in which surroundings influence thought and action, there are other manifestations of it as personalities, who make their lives emphatic in the line of their calling, by in reality giving character to the environment, and by making the latter subservient rather than a conditioning cause. In the former class there are grouped those who are content to take for granted the experiences of others, and to make the latter a dictum as to what shall be the guiding influence of thought and action; in the other class are found personalities who, while willing to accept what has

been done, it only becomes a law unto them, when by analysis it presents the same relation in application; and it is to this latter class in all the learned professions that belongs the credit of establishing the advanced lines of thought and action now prevailing.

To this latter class of individuals Dr. John B. Murphy must be placed as belonging. His early boyhood, environed as it was by surroundings calculated to develop the sturdy qualities of mind and muscle, kindled within him an ambition to attain success. With wonderful perseverance he never thought of failure. At college he was a diligent and faithful student and when his collegiate course was finished he entered upon his chosen field with the same determination to succeed as had characterized his former years. Genial and pleasant in address with a kindly disposition he made many friends. In the field of general practice he very soon attained a very worthy position, and by his earnest attention to his patients won the confidence of a large circle of people who esteemed him for his untiring devotion and faithfulness as a physician and a friend.

In 1881, in addition to attending to the exacting calls of a laborious practice, he accepted the position of attending physician to the Institute for the Deaf and Dumb at Belleville, and continued to discharge the duties thereof until his appointment in 1890 to the position of resident physician at Mimico Asylum. The latter institution was at that time a branch of Toronto Asylum. He brought to the duties of his new position a ripened experience attained in the field as a general practitioner. The kindly disposition which he had always manifested was naturally calculated to make him popular as an asylum officer. His work at Mimico was that common to all new institutions, and it fell to him to lay the foundation and direct the early course of the asylum through many discouragements. When, in 1894, the new asylum on the banks of the St. Lawrence River was completed, Dr. Murphy was promoted to the position of medical superintendent. In his new home he soon made friends and entered upon the duties of his new position with zeal and energy. He had a staff of officers, many of whom were without experience in

institution work. The patients were for several years admitted for the most part by transfer from other asylums, and in Ontario, as elsewhere, such admissions do not furnish a very interesting or hopeful class to labor for. This, however, did not afford any discouragement to Dr. Murphy. He sought to bring to the institution everything calculated to make its surroundings comfortable and home-like. He was a man of an independent nature and sought to carry out his own plans and ideals for making the institution what he conceived it should be. While recognizing the necessity for discipline he sought out and followed a pathway which he endeavored to make most peaceful for everyone. He was a man who always sought to avoid trouble and friction with everyone. While naturally of a most affectionate nature he was possessed of a native caution and modesty which made him slow to form friendships and diffident in asserting himself among strangers. He always took a patriotic interest in everything pertaining to the welfare of Canada, but never took a prominent part in public affairs. Those who knew him intimately found him an excellent conversationalist and always ready to listen with the greatest deference to those with whose opinions he might differ. He was a broad-minded man, and his individuality was perhaps more marked by those who did not know him intimately than by those who were brought in daily contact with him. His wish was that the patients entrusted to his care might have every comfort. He was especially desirous of having the term asylum made obsolete, and sought to bring on all occasions the hospital aspect to the institution. He was a thoughtful reader and delighted in perusing the reports of the work others were doing in the great field of psychiatry. While never taking any active part in the proceedings of the American Medico-Psychological Association he enjoyed attending its meetings, and had a keen appreciation of the privileges he there enjoyed. He was present with his wife and daughter at the meeting last year in Washington and thoroughly appreciated the reunion with his co-workers on that occasion.

The home life of Dr. Murphy was exceptionally happy. He was a great lover of children, and he was never too busy to lay aside anything to gratify and delight the little ones. On

the very morning of his death he took an active part by entering into some innocent pleasures at his own fireside. With a genial greeting to his associates he left the executive building of the institution on Saturday evening apparently in his usual good health, and the last we saw of him in life was drawing one of his young children on a sled down the avenue to his residence, while another ran by his side in cheerful glee with the pleasure the little company so much enjoyed. The following day being Sunday he attended church in Brockville and walked a good part of the way home. When he arrived at his house he complained of feeling faint, and lying down on a couch his condition was noticed to be serious. Before a physician from the institution could reach the house his spirit had fled. Cardiac degeneration had long been suspected, but with that prudence and caution so characteristic of the man he seldom or never made any reference to his physical condition. The suddenness of his death, it need not be said, came as a fearful shock to everyone. To Mrs. Murphy and the six children, so unexpectedly called to mourn the loss of an affectionate husband and father, were extended the heartfelt sympathies of a large circle of friends. On January 20th his remains were laid away and a last tribute of respect was paid to the memory of one who had for ten years been actively engaged in directing the management of the Brockville Asylum.

